



Ola Lokahi

Creating a Healthy Hawaii Together

MAY 2017

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The mission of the Department of Health is to protect and improve the health and environment for all people in Hawaii. We believe that an optimal state of physical, mental, social and environmental well-being is a right and responsibility of all of Hawaii's people.

What You Should Know About Rat Lungworm Disease

By now, you've heard of Rat Lungworm (RLW) disease which has been a high-profile story reported by the local, national and international news media.

To date, DOH has confirmed 14 cases of RLW in Hawaii so far this year. While we are continuing to monitor and investigate reported cases of RLW, bear in mind these important facts to keep you and your family safe:

- RLW, or *Angiostrongylus*, is a rare disease that affects the brain and spinal cord. It is caused by a parasitic worm found in rats, slugs and snails.
- Unlike many other diseases, *Angiostrongylus* cannot be spread from person-to-person.
- People can get infected by eating raw or undercooked snails or slugs that are infected with the parasite. People have also become infected by eating unwashed raw produce such as leafy greens that contain a tiny snail or slug or parts of one.
- There is no medication or specific treatment for the disease but most people recover fully without treatment.
- Hawaii remains a very safe travel destination. Of the 8.7 million visitors to our state in 2015, there was one (1) case of RLW reported in a visitor, one (1) visitor case in 2016 and two (2) visitor cases in 2017.

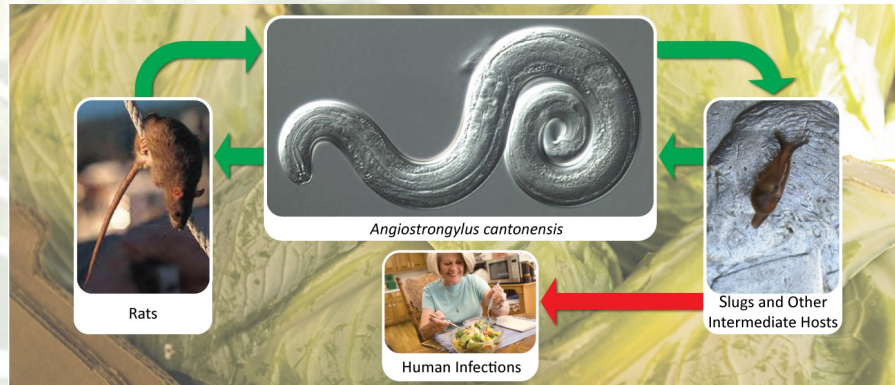


Photo credit: Hawaii Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

TIPS TO PREVENT RLW

- Make sure to properly store, inspect and wash produce, especially leafy greens.
- Supervise young children playing outdoors to prevent them from putting a snail or slug in their mouths.
- Take precautions to control slug, snails and rats around homes and workplaces, especially home gardens.
- Farmers, as well as food handlers and processors, should control slugs, snails, and rats on the farm.
- If you handle snails or slugs, wear gloves and wash your hands.

The DOH stresses that locally-grown produce is safe to eat. Just remember to wash all vegetables and fruits thoroughly no matter where they come from.

Food safety inspectors regularly distribute information to the food food industry, including at

farmers' markets where flyers are passed out to vendors and shoppers. DOH's Food Safety Program continues to inspect and educate food establishments across the state for safe food handling and preparation. Food establishments are reminded to use only approved and licensed sources and carefully inspect and wash all produce during food preparation.

The most common symptoms of rat lungworm disease include severe headache and neck stiffness, but symptoms may vary widely among individuals. If you are experiencing headache, fever, stiff neck, tingling or painful feelings in the skin or extremities, seek immediate medical attention.

More information on the signs and symptoms of rat lungworm infection are on the DOH website at: www.health.hawaii.gov.

DOH Welcomes New TB Control Branch Chief

The State DOH has announced that **Dr. Elizabeth MacNeill** is Hawaii's new Tuberculosis (TB) Control Branch Chief. Dr. MacNeill has been with the TB Control Branch for the past seven years and has functioned as the TB Branch Chief on numerous occasions.

She takes the reins from Dr. Richard Brostrom, who has been requested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide more time for activities in the Compact Affiliated



States in the Western Pacific. Dr. Brostrom did a superb job as branch chief and strongly supported Dr. MacNeill's selection as DOH's new TB Branch Chief. As a joint CDC-DOH employee, Dr. Brostrom will continue to work with our program in a more advisory capacity.

"We look forward to having Dr. Elizabeth MacNeill as our new Chief of the DOH TB Control Branch," says Glenn M. Wasserman, MD, MPH Chief, Communicable Disease and Public Health Nursing Division. "I have every confidence in Dr. MacNeill's professionalism and competence as she assumes this new role."

Legislature Approves \$1 Million For RLW Public Education

While much of the debate at the 2017 Legislative session focused on the financially-troubled rail project, there were also measures that directly affected the Hawaii Department of Health.

Topping the list was the \$1 million in funds to combat rat lungworm disease (RLW). The funds were added to the State budget during the final week of the legislative session.

"The Legislature has recognized that RLW is an important threat that needs to be addressed now," says Keith Kawaoka, deputy director of Environmental Health.

DOH has not yet determined a plan for use of the funds which would be available after the Governor's approval no earlier than July 1, 2017. Legislators have expressed their concerns for increased public education and

outreach about RLW, so some of the funds may be used towards those efforts.

DOH appreciates the provision of funds from the Legislature and will work to ensure the money is used effectively to respond to and prevent the spread of RLW. DOH remains committed to working with the counties, government agencies and other stakeholders to determine how to best use the funds.

Protecting Yourself Against the Mumps

The State DOH is investigating an increasing number of cases of mumps infection statewide. Since March 2017, DOH has become aware of two clusters of cases, together currently involving at least ten (10) individuals on Oahu, bringing the total number of confirmed cases statewide this year to twenty (20). To date, none of the infected individuals have required hospitalization.

"Because this disease is easily spread, we expect additional cases to be reported in the coming weeks," says State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park. "Vaccination is still the best protection against this disease. We encourage everyone to review their immunization record and talk to their healthcare provider about mumps vaccination."

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus. A classic symptom of mumps is *parotitis* (swelling of the salivary glands in front of the ears) resulting in a tender, swollen jaw. Other symptoms include fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness, and loss of appetite. Some people with mumps have very mild or no symptoms. Persons should seek medical attention immediately if they develop symptoms.

The disease is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Transmission can also occur when sharing items such as cups or eating utensils, or by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Persons with mumps should stay home from school or work for nine (9) days after the onset of *parotitis* to keep from spreading the disease to others.

The vaccine is available at local pharmacies. To locate a vaccinating pharmacy, visit <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/vaccines-immunizations/vaccine-locators/> or call the Aloha United Way information and referral line at 2-1-1.



Kinau Hale Toastmasters Club Finds Personal Success

Let's face it—we can all benefit from better communication skills. Whether it's delivering strong presentations at work, leading more productive staff meetings or relating better with coworkers and clients, imagine what we could accomplish if we presented our point of view more persuasively.

Members of the Kinau Hale Toastmasters Club meet twice a month during lunch to do just that. The club was founded in 2011 by Laura Arcibal, who at the time was the All-Hazards Preparedness program manager, and sanctioned by former DOH Director Loretta Fuddy. Branch chief Michele Nakata has played a key role in moving the club forward. Today, the club is a DOH-sponsored and approved activity by Director Virginia Pressler, MD.

The Club provides an encouraging and supportive environment for members to improve communication skills. But Toastmasters is more than simply delivering great speeches. It's also about acquiring leadership skills, gaining self-confidence and mentoring others. Ultimately, the experiences gained lead to opportunities for further career enhancement and personal development.

"I've benefitted in so many ways," says Club President Kathleen Kromer Baker, Ph.D. and research statistician in the Office of Health Status Monitoring. "I've gained valuable insight into expressing my thoughts, becoming a better listener and how best to give advice and support. I have new friends who share common goals and my speaking skills and confidence have increased. The skills learned have affected so many other areas of my life."

Matthew Turnure, an epidemiologist in the Office of Planning, Policy and Program Development, joined the Club to get speaking experience and improve his communication and leadership skills.



Kinau Hale Toastmasters Club members (from left) Nia Alers Barreto, Michele Nakata, Kathleen Kromer Baker, Jules Kuo, Bridget Velasco, Howard Wiig, Ron Balajadia and Kanani Kaina. Not pictured: Kellen Lovell, Dean Masai, Monica Pule and Matthew Turnure.

"In public health, we work in collaborative groups and present information in a variety of settings," he says. "Toastmasters has helped me gain experience and confidence as a speaker."

BREAKING THE ICE

At each meeting, there are short speeches (about 7 minutes long) and table topics during which questions are asked of members who give two minute or shorter responses. Members or non-members occasionally give longer speeches on topics of interest, many to practice their presentation skills. A timer and grammarian are also present to monitor time limit and word usage.

The first speech new members give is called the "Ice Breaker" which was difficult for Kathleen who was more used to giving formal presentations. She received a rousing applause, which is typical of all speeches. New members receive a standing ovation after their tenth speech, along with a Competent Communicator Award from the International Toastmaster's Organization.

"We not only improve our speaking, leadership and listening skills but we also have fun and laugh a lot," Kathleen says. "If you're a first time visitor, you may find the clapping unusual but it's our way of supporting members' efforts."

Delivering more speeches allows members to fulfill leadership skills requirements and earn awards such as the Competent Leader Award that look great on one's resumé. Toastmasters' training curriculum is evolving to include learning techniques that utilize social media and internet formats.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Prospective members are encouraged to sit in and experience a meeting to see if they would like to join. They should also contact Kathleen at 586-4732 or go online to: <http://kinauhale.toastmastersclub.org>. The Club meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm in the DOH boardroom.

The cost to join is a one-time fee of \$20 and \$51 twice a year. Mentoring is provided by Howard Wiig and Dean Masai from the DBEDT Toastmasters Club.

Kathleen takes great pride in witnessing the tremendous personal and professional growth of each club member.

"I've watched those who gave their first speech grow to become more confident and self-assured speakers," she says. "That's what makes it especially enjoyable and rewarding for me."